

Understanding workplace mental health injuries

KEY INFORMATION FOR WORKERS

Mental health (psychological) injuries at work happen when your job causes you serious stress that leads to mental health problems like anxiety or depression. It is more serious than just feeling stressed for a short time.

A mental health injury could be caused by too much work, workplace bullying, abuse and violence or unclear job expectations.

Your mental health is just as important as your physical health.

Early warning signs of mental health injuries include:



Low mood or energy levels.



Withdrawal - for example less participation in work or social activities.



Headaches and fatigue.



Trouble sleeping.



Not doing as well as usual at work.



Behaviour that's out of character like being overly sensitive, irritable or tense.



Finding it hard to focus.

If you are experiencing these warning signs, reach out for help.

We acknowledge WorkSafe Victoria as the source of these warning signs. You can find their list here: <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/early-intervention-work-related-stress-what-managers-need-know>

REACH OUT FOR HELP

Getting help shows strength, not weakness. If you think you might have a mental health injury, take action and reach out for help early. You can:

- ☑ Contact your work's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) if they have one. EAP is a free and confidential counselling service, and they don't tell your manager or colleagues what you talk about.
- ☑ Call a helpline that provides phone counselling, if you are feeling down. These are free and confidential services and they provide support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Beyond Blue www.beyondblue.org.au

Private, safe counselling. They can also help you find the right mental health service for you.

Phone line 1300 22 46 36

Text chat 0477 131 114

Online chat www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/talk-to-a-counsellor/chat

LifeLine www.lifeline.org.au

Confidential crisis support 24 hours a day

Phone 13 11 14

Text 0477 13 11 14

Online chat <https://www.lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat/>

- ☑ Talk to your doctor about how you feel and ask for a referral to a mental health service such as a psychologist.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Here are some things you can do to help improve your mental health:

- Stay connected with friends, family and trusted colleagues.
- Attend your doctor and mental health appointments.
- Try out different techniques to help you manage your thoughts and feelings. You could start with using a free meditation app, like Smiling Mind www.smilingmind.com.au/smiling-mind-app. Keeping a journal is a good way to process your feelings and it can help to calm your racing thoughts.
- Focus on what you can control.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION CLAIMS

Mental health injuries that happen at work are covered by workers' compensation, just like physical injuries. The injury must be caused by something other than normal management action, so if you were disciplined in a normal way or got reasonable feedback, that's not eligible.

Note: *In some states, just feeling stressed or burnt out might not be enough for a claim. Consider seeking advice from your union on your specific situation. It is a good idea to contact the union before you fill out any paperwork for your claim.*

To make a claim:

1. **Tell your manager** about the issue. If the issue relates to your manager, you could inform an alternative manager or human resources.
2. **See your doctor** and ask for a Workers Compensation Capacity Certificate.
3. **Fill out a claim form** and give it to your employer or lodge it with the insurer.
4. **Keep copies** of all paperwork.
5. If you are a member, you can **contact your union** for support throughout the process.

It can be beneficial to keep detailed records of events at work that make your mental health worse and any conversations with managers or co-workers about workplace problems. Keep notes on what the doctor tells you, any workplace changes that you ask for or get, and messages between you, your employer, and the insurance company.

GETTING BACK TO WORK

Return to work after a mental health injury requires planning and support similar to a physical injury. See the It Pays To Care website, where we have a factsheet for more information about return-to-work planning.

MORE INFORMATION

For support through your workers compensation journey, contact:

- Your workers' compensation case manager
- Your workplace supervisor
- Your workplace Health and Safety Representative
- Your workplace Return To Work Coordinator (if they have one)
- Your workplace HR team
- Your union, if you are a member.

The It Pays To Care website has a list of key contacts for workers who have been injured including workers' compensation authorities, mental health services and financial support services Visit www.itpaystocare.org/workers/worker.

It Pays To Care publishes independent information for everyone involved in work injuries, from workers to employers to insurers and regulators.

Please note that It Pays To Care not a support service.